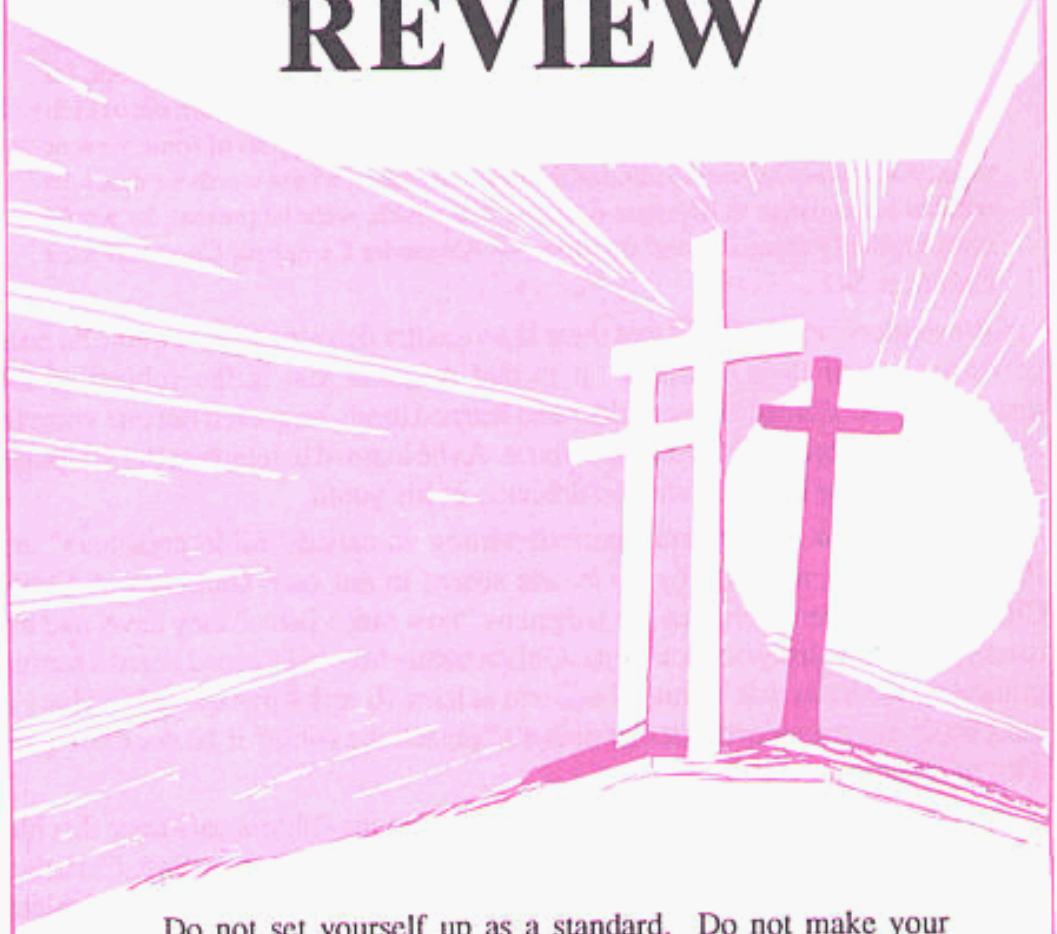
# RESTORATION REVIEW



Do not set yourself up as a standard. Do not make your opinions, your views of duty, your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to your ideal. Do not criticize others, conjecturing as to their motives and passing judgment upon them.—E. G. White, *Day of the Benediction.*

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*The Sense of Scripture: Studies in Interpretation . . .*

## THE DELUSION OF AN ARRAY OF QUOTATIONS

> When I commenced preaching it was usual to quote, in a single sermon, almost a hundred texts of Scripture. Each head of discourse had its own list of authorities. In my youthful sallies I was accustomed to quote ten *texts*, as we called them, for one I now cite. There is no greater delusion than an array of verses, torn out of their respective contexts, and arranged in a new connection in support of some view or tenet, that was not before the mind of the inspired author, whose words we thus take without his consent, to illustrate or prove that which, were he present, he would most explicitly repudiate and disallow. - Alexander Campbell, *Campbell-Rice Debate*, p.542.

Alexander Campbell said that there is no greater delusion than to quote an array of verses out of their contexts. It is that delusion that is the subject of this installment. As Campbell grew older and learned more, he quoted but one verse for every ten he quoted in his youth he tells us. Ashe learned to interpret the Scriptures more responsibly he overcame the delusion of his youth.

This delusion is especially present among so-called "Bible preachers" and Fundamentalists, and it is by no means absent in our own Churches of Christ' Christian Churches. Sermons are judged by "how much Bible" they have, and this usually means an array of quotations. Only recently here in Denton I heard a sermon praised on the basis that "It must have had at least 70 scriptures quoted." Many of our people are convinced that one doesn't "preach the Bible" if he does not quote a lot of Scripture.

It is odd that people who profess such loyalty to the Bible would have this idea when the Bible itself would suggest just the opposite. The earliest Christians studied portions of Scripture or letters as a whole and not as an array of isolated quotes. This is the way it was with Paul and the apostles: "When this epistle is read among you, see that it is read also in the church of the Laodicians, and that you likewise read the epistle from Laodicea" (Col. 4:16). Paul assured the Ephesians that they could "understand the mystery" when they read the letter he wrote to them (Eph. 3.4), and Rev. 1:3 blesses both the reader and the hearer of the words of that book. Today in our churches we have little reading of the Bible itself, and not much study of it contextually. We have sermons instead, and these are often prooftexting: an affirmation followed by a prooftext. Such preachers often dogmatize, even pontificate. We are right, and we prove it by endless quotations from the Bible!

There is far too little expository teaching in our pulpits and classrooms, where the Bible, if no more than a paragraph, is explained and made relevant to our time and circumstance.

It is a fallacy to presume that one is teaching the Bible when he is quoting an array of verses. True, the hearers may become familiar with certain passages when they are repeated over and over, but they will understand little of the Scriptures as a whole and in connection, and virtually nothing of the intent of the writer in a given passage. Edification means more than lining up Bible verses.

If the Bible is our guide in this regard, it is evident that when Jesus and the apostles made use of their Scriptures, which is our Old Testament, it was their intent to get at the meaning of a verse, perhaps but one, rather than to string out quotations as one hangs clothes on a line. On two different occasions Jesus answers his critics by referring to one verse. "Go and find out what this means, 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice,'" he said to the Pharisees in reference to Hosea 6:6 (see both Mt. 9:13 and Mt. 12:7).

This suggests that our Lord was highly selective in drawing upon the Scriptures. So it was when he confronted Satan in the wilderness, a few well-placed passages being sufficient. In his home town of Nazareth he read from the Scriptures, all of two verses from Isaiah, and then shocked his hearers with, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing." Jesus' use of Scripture indicates that his desire was to reach the heart and mind of people qualitatively rather than quantitatively. He did not bombard and lambast with the Bible.

His chosen apostle, who gives us much of the New Testament, was not unlike him in this regard. Paul was in fact very effective with one-liners, such as "The just shall live by faith" (Rom. 1:17), which he quoted from the Old Testament to support his great doctrine of justification by faith. Even when Paul resorted to "As it is written," his favorite entree, he often referred to but a single line, as in 1 Cor. 3:19. When he uses Scripture more extensively, as he does throughout Romans, he usually selects a body of verses, such as a Psalm, in context, in making his point, as we see in Rom. 3:10-18. As fond as Paul is of drawing upon Scripture, the reader never gets the impression that he indulged in overkill.

Actor Alan Alda recently demonstrated to a graduating class at Harvard Medical School that it is not how much you say that counts but what you say, not how much you prove something but how well you prove it. Since he had for many years played the part of a physician on TV, the students supposed that he would have a lot to say about what it means to be a doctor. He surprised them with how little - and yet how much - he had to say. When it was time for him to address the graduating class, he got up and spoke one sentence and sat back down. That one sentence struck home with such force that the students gave him a standing ovation.

The sentence was "The head bone is connected to the heart bone."

Those students are more likely to remember that one sentence than if Alda had talked at length. And long after they become doctors they may be influenced by the great truth of a single sentence, that in serving suffering humanity the heart counts too.

Brother Campbell would have us see that imposing on an audience a headfull of verses is actually a hermeneutical fallacy. It is not the right way to interpret or to teach the Bible. It is the shot from a rifle that hits the bull's eye, while the scattered shots of a shotgun blast go astray and fall short of the target. It is results we want, not noise. We want to teach and edify and encourage, not to intimidate or impress. We want the Spirit to speak through God's word, not ourselves.

In saying that we might use less Scripture and yet be more effective I do not want to be misunderstood. We should be eminently Biblical in our preaching and teaching, and this may sometime call for the use of considerable Scripture, especially in verse by verse contextual study, or even in thematic studies where we gather all the information available on a given subject.

But I am saying that we should nurture people in the Bible somewhat like we nurture them with food. The best cooks do not necessarily serve up everything in the cupboard. One delicious, nutritious dish on one table just might be better fare than a smorgasbord on another. Being truly Biblical is not simply calling up an array of verses on a given subject, but in being a faithful interpreter of the Scriptures. — *the Editor*

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## OTHER AND LESS CRUCIAL THINGS

Inasmuch as the above installment is shorter than usual this is an appropriate time to add a few footnotes on matters that are less serious abuses of Scripture but which nonetheless deserve some attention. These lesser hermeneutical sins may be something like tailgating on the highway in that while they may not be all that serious they are reflective of a careless handling of the Bible, and they may be dangerous.

Oddly enough, it is only in the Churches of Christ/Christian Churches that I hear about "the Hebrew writer." I myself picked it up along the way, and when I was at Harvard I made reference in an essay to this non-existent New Testament character. In the margin alongside my reference to "the Hebrew writer" my professor placed a question mark, which is all he needed to do. I no longer use such a reference because, of course, there is no Hebrew writer in the New Testament. They all wrote in Greek. There is the writer of the book of Hebrews, but he wrote in Greek, which makes him the Greek writer of the book of Hebrews. In all the

commentaries you read by what we call "denominational" scholars on the book of Hebrews you will never find the first reference to "the Hebrew writer." So the next time you hear one of our preachers use this term, which he probably will if he refers to the book of Hebrews, you will do him a favor by asking him, "Do you mean the writer of the book of Hebrews?" Because there may be the likes of that Harvard professor in the audience that will think he is an ignoramus. I am at a loss to know how that idiotic reference ever originated among us.

Nor is there the book of Revelations in the Bible. In the history of the church the last book of the Bible has been known as "the Apocalypse of St. John the Divine" or simply "the Apocalypse." When that Greek term is translated it becomes the book of Revelation, which is of course a correct way of referring to it. But not Revelations! One might possibly use that term in referring to all the revelations in the Bible, but there is no one book so named.

Our prayers sometime reveal a misunderstanding of important Biblical truth, such as praying in the first person when called on to address the Father in behalf of the entire congregation. Believers share a glorious covenantal relationship with God. This is why our Lord taught us to pray "Our Father," and this is the way we should pray when we are leading our sisters and brothers in prayer. We are all praying and so we should all say the Amen. It is offensive to the nature of the church for one to lead a prayer saying I, my, and me. We are saying so much when we say "Our Father," and we should never miss an opportunity to do so, perhaps even in private prayer, though of course the first person is appropriate when we pray alone.

What we think of the church may reflect what we believe about God and Christ. To use "the church," whether in our prayers or ordinary conversation, to refer to anything less than the universal (catholic) Body of Christ is not only sectarian but shallow. Among our people it is common for "the Lord's church" to refer to that denomination or denominations known as "The Church of Christ" or "The Christian Church." We not only do ourselves a great disservice when we do this, since it reinforces our exclusivism, but it causes us to appear ridiculous to the Christian world at large. Hardly anything will "renew our minds" more than making it a point to refer to the church in its Biblical sense, in reference to "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours," as Paul puts it in 1 Cor. 1:2. In saying this I recognize that the church may also be referred to in a local sense, and so a single congregation may be called "the church." But when we are referring to the church at large we should think in terms of all those who are in Christ the world over, most of whom will differ with us on a lot of things.

Another oddity that I have found only among our people is a rule of interpretation that goes like this: the Bible teaches by direct command, approved example, and necessary inference. There are scores of books on hermeneutics in print today, but I dare say you will find no such

rule in any of them, unless it be written by one of us. The intention of this rule is good, for it proposes to make clear what applies to us today and what does not. But it only muddies the water. It is in fact simply not true, for there are direct commands, such as foot washing and the holy kiss, and approved examples, such as communal living in the Jerusalem church, that none of our folk believes apply to the church today. And the necessary inference rule has no value, for what is "necessarily inferred" ends up being a matter of opinion, such as how many cups arc to be used for Communion or whether a church can have a Sunday School. There are some useful rules for interpretation, but this is not one of them. Nor is this a lesser hermeneutical fallacy, but we mention it here nonetheless.

We usually use the term evangelist inappropriately. In the Bible the evangelist is one who preaches the gospel to the world, a proclaimer of the good news to the lost. And he is sometimes found setting a church in order and caring for it until it has elders or pastors. But he is not a local minister or pastor, one whose work is to minister to the church on a permanent basis. Nor is an evangelist one who holds big meetings for churches, one after the other. An evangelist is a missionary, one who is planting the cause of Christ in new fields. If we were "honest to God" we would call our "local evangelist" the pastor, as other churches do, since that is what he is. Even "the minister" is not Biblical since we are all ministers or servants (they come from the same Greek term). Neither is this a small matter, especially for a people who claim to value Christian origins. — *the Editor*

## SEVENTH DAY ADVENTISTS: THE CARING CHURCH

We all sometimes embarrass ourselves by doing some thoughtless thing, such as trying to pour ketchup with the cap still on the bottle. I felt this way when I showed up at the Seventh Day Adventist Church here in Denton on a Sunday morning. "My, they are slower getting to church than our folk are," I said to myself when it was time for their assembly and not one soul had arrived. When it dawned on me that, of course, the Seventh Day Adventists assemble on Saturday and not Sunday, I hurried off to visit another church, somewhat chagrined but resolved to return on a Saturday, which I soon did. I have since made a second visit.

So, the first thing to remember about these interesting Christians is that Saturday is their Sunday, which must be something of a problem to them, living as they do in a Sunday-keeping world. But that is by no means all that sets them apart as a unique people. They are also vegetarians. No hamburgers! They also tithe and wash one another's feet. They are also the most missionary-minded of any denomination I know of. Of the 185 countries that the

American Bible Society lists as possible church missions the Adventists are in 179 of them, far more than any other denomination. Nations where they do not have missions are places where they are forbidden to enter, such as Tibet, Afghanistan, and East Germany.

We herein identify them as "the caring church" because of their emphasis upon benevolence and humanitarian concerns. They personally operate 155 hospitals all over the world, along with 247 dispensaries and clinics, as well as 63 nursing homes and retirement centers. All of these serve about six million people a year. Their health program in this country, with 9,700 beds in 55 hospitals, is one of the largest health-care chains in the nation.

Equally impressive is their worldwide school system. They have 32,000 teachers for 650,000 students in *5A00* schools, from kindergarten through graduate professional schools. In the United States they have 1,300 primary and secondary schools, ten colleges and two universities, a total of *650,000* students.

They have compassion for the poor and destitute of the world. In a recent year they reached out to 14 million people who were victimized by war, famine, floods, earthquakes, and other disasters through their Adventist Development and Relief Agency. Many of their congregations have community service facilities. They humbly say to the world around them, "If you ever know someone in need, call your friends, the Adventists."

They are also about the only major denomination that is not losing more members than it gains. They average a 7% gain each year. Though they are a new denomination, beginning only in the 1840's, they now have 4.5 million in 24,000 congregations in 185 countries. The number of countries they give varies slightly from the above count by the American Bible Society. Their official figures do not appear to be inflated, which is a common practice of major denominations.

They even on occasion have a woman in the pulpit, and while it is yet rare and still controversial, they have a few women ministers. One would suppose this would be no problem for them since one of their founding "fathers" was a woman, Ellen G. White. She is highly esteemed and her writings are readily available in the foyer. Was she inspired? The answer is yes, but her writings are not made equal to the Scriptures, and in my visits she was never read from the pulpit along with Scripture, as Mary Baker Eddy was read in the Christian Science church and Joseph Smith in the Mormon church when I visited those churches. When I asked them if Mrs. White has a place with them anything like the place Eddy has with the Christian Scientists or Smith with the Mormons, the answer was a resounding no. "We do not have other Bibles like they have," they said.

When I returned to the church on Saturday, Oct. 3,1987, I was there over four hours. It happened to be Communion Saturday, which comes only quarterly. Along with Communion was foot washing. This was followed by a congregational love feast to which I was invited. This allowed me to ask a lot of questions about their church, and through the kind offices of a Filipino, who likes to argue, I was able to draw upon some of our old arguments for "the first day of the week" as opposed to Sabbath-keeping. It was all in the Christian spirit, and we were able to disagree agreeably. I was reminded of an Adventist missionary with whom I did graduate work many years ago, who told me, "We've always said that one of our men is not ready to go out as a missionary until he has debated a Campbellite."

I was impressed that the Adventist sisters could lay out so many appetizing dishes without any meat. They even have dishes, all vegetarian, that look and even taste like meat. Once you feast on their elegant salads and creative casseroles you are persuaded that vegetarians do all right for themselves after all. And it probably makes for better health, certainly less cholesterol. Nutrition is definitely part of Adventist religion. They not only avoid alcohol and nicotine but caffeine as well. No coffee or tea even at a love feast! They may well be the cleanest living of all Christians. They emphasize living a holy life, quiet and unassuming.

They often kneel for prayer even though they do not have kneelers as do the Episcopalians. Those who presided at the Lord's table did so on their knees. Their sermons are simple, direct and Biblical. They are prophetic in their teaching, stressing the imminent advent of Christ, from which comes their name. But they are not Fundamentalists, neither in attitude nor in their view of the inerrancy of the Bible. They have a neat way of saying, "It was the penman that was inspired, not the pen."

I was especially interested in their foot washing service, which they associate with the Supper, as did Christ and his apostles. Following the Supper they repair to classrooms for this service, advising those who do not care to participate to remain in their seats. While I was not yet ready to take part in the foot washing as such, I wanted to observe, so I joined them.

They segregate by sex, the women and girls in one room, the men and boys in another, lest any woman feel ill at ease with a man washing her feet. I quietly joined the men as an observer. I was touched by the simplicity and humility of it all. Fathers washing their son's feet at church! I can see that that would be very meaningful to a child, especially as he grows older and looks back on his growing- up years in the church. And of course men washing each other's feet Don't you suppose they are more likely to treat each other in a loving way after washing each other's feet? I suspect we in Churches of Christ/Christian Churches would surprise the audience if we opened a big debate with a foot washing service!

The Adventist do this of course because of the teaching of Christ: "If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn. 13:14-15). I may question these dear people on some of their doctrines, but not on this one. I believe what Jesus is teaching here is that we are to serve and love one another in the humblest of ways, and that we do not satisfy this simply by a foot washing ceremony. We might "wash feet" by ministering to the sick or by babysitting and giving Mom a few hours off. But I would not seek to dissuade anyone from a literal practice of it. It is in fact eminently Christian, especially when it is done unobtrusively. And if any people are unobtrusive it is the Adventists.

Neither are they as sectarian as many of us. They have a strong theology of baptism, teaching that "Baptism by immersion is a symbol of our union with Christ, the forgiveness of our sins, and our reception of the Holy Spirit," but they do not believe that they have to do the baptizing. When I asked if they would receive a Baptist simply on the profession of his faith and without rebaptizing him, the answer was an unequivocal yes. I told them that it is too bad that the Baptists are not as gracious toward them!

But they did equivocate when I asked if one could join them who did not hold their view of the Sabbath, that he simply liked their church and didn't care whether he went to church on Saturday or Sunday. I think the answer was yes he could be a member, but they definitely believe that he should understand the significance of the Sabbath.

Through the years they have said a lot of hard things about Sunday-keeping, such as naming it "the mark of the beast" and the symbol of apostasy. It was ordained by the Roman emperor Constantine and not by God, they have insisted. But those were their debating days, and while they probably still believe those things they are now more irenic and ecumenical. The popes have imposed Sunday- keeping, they have always charged, but they nonetheless had a Roman Catholic missionary in the pulpit during one of my visits.

My Filipino friend seemed surprised when I pointed out that the earliest Christians probably observed two days, the Sabbath and the first day of the week, but because the resurrection of Christ was on the first day that day gradually became known as "the Lord's day," and that long before Constantine. The emperor merely legalized what had long been practiced. And believers assembled on "the first day of the week" long before there was any pope to legislate such things. As early as about 150 A.D. Justin Martyr wrote in his *Apology*, "And on the day that is called the day of the sun there is an assembly of all who live in the towns or in the country . . . and there is the distribution and partaking by all of the Eucharistic elements."

They concede that our Lord's resurrection was on the first day of the week, but that does not negate the Ten Commandments, they insist, and it is there that the Sabbath was eternally enjoined by God: *Remember* the *Sabbath to keep it holy.* The Seventh Day Adventists could be described as "the church of the Ten Commandments." In that law they not only find the basis for holy living but for the observance of the Sabbath.

Our "Seventh Day" brethren err, I believe, when they conclude that whenever "the commandments" are referred to in the New Testament it refers to the Ten Commandments, such as in 1 Cor 7:19, "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God is what matters." Or when Jesus says in Jn. 14:15, "If you love Me, keep my commandments." Since these refer to the Ten Commandments, we are enjoined to keep the Sabbath, for this is one of the Ten Commandments, they reason.

But aren't there commandments beside the Ten? And when we look for the Sabbath law in the New Testament we do not find it. Even when Jesus on a few occasions had reason to name some of the Ten Commandments, as in his conversation with the rich young ruler in Mt. 19:l8, he never referred to the Sabbath law. He never imposed the Sabbath law on his disciples. Nor does any apostle, and it is extremely unlikely that Paul could have believed that Christians were to observe the Sabbath and yet write what he did in Col. 2:16-17: "Therefore let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Christ." Our Adventist brethren are not yet ready to see that the Sabbath was only a shadow of things to come, as Paul apparently did.

It is impressive that when Jesus was asked to name the greatest commandment of all that he named the two greatest, neither of which is among the Ten Commandments. He said that upon those two commandments, love for God and love for neighbor, "hang all the Law and the Prophets" (Mt. 22:40). This must refer to the moral law of God, which Paul says is written in our hearts and which undergirds all the written law of Scripture. This is what is eternal and applicable to all people in all ages. Only to the extent that the Ten Commandments are expressive of that moral law are they eternal and universally applicable. There is no evidence that the Sabbath law is of this nature, but was rather an ordinance given to a particular people (1srael) for a particular purpose (remembering God as creator). Most Christians throughout the ages have believed that "the first day of the week" is to be observed, not because it displaces the Sabbath, but because it is a memorial of the most important event in history, even more than the creation itself, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

It is a fact that our Adventist friends would do well to ponder that if the God of heaven had willed to exalt the Sabbath while giving the Christian faith to the world he would only have needed to have made that day the day for the resurrection of his Son from the dead. He rather willed that the Christ lay dead all that Sabbath day, and it was only "as the first day of the week began to dawn" that the greatest story ever told became a reality.

But when all this is said the fact remains that there are at least 4.5 million Christians in the world who do not see it this way and who believe they should observe the Sabbath. What are we to do with them? We cannot accuse them of blatant and obvious disobedience to the will of God, for there are grounds for honest differences of opinion on this subject. The New Testament nowhere clearly mandates the observance of the first day. It is a deduction — a good one, we believe — but still only a deduction. The prooftexts we often use, such as Acts 20:7 and I Cor. 16:2, are by no means conclusive. If there was a clear command to observe the first day in the New Testament there would be no Seventh Day Adventists.

So, our "Seventh Day" brethren give us an opportunity to show how much we believe in unity. They believe in Christ and have been baptized just as we have. They are our sisters and brothers in Christ, and whether they assemble on Saturday or Sunday does not change that fact. If they should start observing the first day next Sunday, they would be no more our brothers and sisters than they are now. We can accept them as equals in Christ even when we believe them to be wrong about the Sabbath. We do not have to see everything exactly alike to be united in Christ. If so, then we could not be united with anyone, not even with ourselves. To obey the injunction of Scripture, "Receive one another even as Christ has received you" (Rom. 15:7*)* does not mean that we approve of everything that is believed or practiced by those that we receive. if it disturbs you to have fellowship with brothers who are "in error," then you are to be reminded that you do not have any other kind.

As for what we can learn from our Adventist brethren, the lessons are many. Their missionary zeal and their willingness to sacrifice in order to preach the gospel all over the world is not the least lesson. The integration of their churches, made up of all races and color the world over, is another. Then there is their benevolence toward suffering humanity. They make it a point to be there when they are needed. Their concern for the whole man, body, soul and spirit, is impressive.

By paying their ministers the same, whether they labor abroad or at home or serve a large church or a small one, they avoid a lot of clerical competition and rivalry. Their church in Keene, Tx., where they have a college, has over a thousand members, but its minister makes the same as the one who ministers to the small Denton church. They do not have any "big preachers" that way. You are aware of course that big money makes one a big shot even in the church.

Even their prophetess, Ellen G. White, speaks to us all when she says: "Do not make your opinions, your views of duty, your interpretations of Scripture, a criterion for others and in your heart condemn them if they do not come up to your ideal. Do not criticize others, conjecturing as to their motives and passing judgment upon them." — *the Editor*

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Quite surprising in view of the Seventh Day Adventist's firm belief in the imminent end of the world was their heavy investment in publishing houses, hospitals, homes for the aged, and especially educational institutions. Not only did they maintain numerous academies, colleges, graduate schools, and both a theological seminary and a medical and dental school, they also established a widespread network of elementary schools. Noting their many good works, one observer has commented that seldom, while expecting a kingdom of God from heaven, has a group worked so diligently for one on earth.— Winthrop S. Hudson in *Religion in America.*

The one thing essential for us in order that we may receive and impart the forgiving love of God is so know and believe the love that He has to us. l John 4.16.— E.G. White, *Day Of The Benediction.*

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## WHAT I THINK ABOUT THE FUTURE

The other day Ouida asked me a question that she never asked me before. Out of the clear blue came, "Do you ever think about the fact that life in this world is about over and that you will soon be going to another world?" I don't think the question was asked simply because I will this year turn 70, for neither of us is all that much preoccupied with ageing. We take the days as they come, one at a time, with no undue concern of the tomorrows, whether they be few or many. Ouida wanted to know if I gave much thought to the brevity and uncertainty of life and to what extent I contemplate the unknown future.

My answer might have surprised her. I told her that I thought about it every day, that I am continually conscious that this world is not my home, and that when I leave this world I am not leaving home but going home. If life as a whole is like a great theatre, life in this world is but the vestibule, preparatory to the main event that goes on beyond the doors leading into the vast inner hall where life is life in its fullness. This world is not what it is all about, but "the glory that is afterward to be revealed."

I told Ouida that I am very conscious of how easy it is to be deceived by the world and thus live as if there is no eternity. Christians are not displaced persons in this world, which would suggest that they should not be where they are, but they are pilgrims with a mission and a destiny that reach beyond this world. It both amazes me and disturbs me that professed believers, even those in their sunset years, live as though there is no God's tomorrow. We are in this world, and we are to be a blessing to it, leaving it better than we found it; but we are not of the world, and we do not march to its drumbeat. If we appear to be out of step, it is because we listen to a different drummer.

Hardly a day passes but what I think of the great truths in Ps. 90, where the author seems to be dealing with the kind of question Ouida asked me. He tells us that "time" doesn't matter much, not even a thousand years, which is but a day to God. Moreover, the years we do have pass like a sigh. In the reality of the brevity of life, which the psalm limits to "if by reason of strength, fourscore," the writer prays a prayer that we should all often pray, "So teach us to number our days, that we might apply our hearts unto wisdom."

That psalm emphasizes what a life of wisdom is all about, praising God in such terms as: "Lord, you have been our dwelling place in all generations. Before the mountains were brought forth, Or ever you formed the earth and the world, Even from everlasting to everlasting, You are God."

Ouida's question led me to ponder on what I believe more generally about the future: the destiny of this world, our bodies, the heavens about us, the seemingly insoluble problems faced by our troubled world. What will God's tomorrow be like?

I have long been impressed with the very last paragraph Alexander Campbell ever wrote, after 43 years as an editor. I pass it along to you because it addresses some of the questions I have raised, even if all too briefly:

> The present material universe, yet unrevealed in all its area, in all its tenantries, in all its riches, beauty and grandeur, will he wholly regenerated. Of this fact we have full assurance: since he that now sits upon the Throne of the Universe, has pledged his word for is' saying, "Behold, I will create all things new:"- consequently "new heavens, new earth," - consequently, new tenantries, new employments, new pleasures, new joys, new ecstasies. There is a fullness of joy, a fullness of glory, and a fullness of blessedness, of which no living man, however enlightened, however enlarged, however gifted, ever formed or entertained one adequate conception. -*Mill. Harb.*, 1865, p. 517.

Anyone who believes what is in that one paragraph, so pregnant with meaning and hope, believes a great deal. It should change one's entire outlook if he really believes that this material universe, including this terrestrial ball upon which we live, has a destiny. There will be a new earth, the old being regenerated by the power of God. While Campbell found his confidence for this from Him who sits upon the throne (Rev. 21:5), he could also have drawn

upon the assurance of the apostle Paul, who says in Rom. 8:21 that "the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And there is at least a hint from Jesus Christ when he promises, "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth."

I like Campbell's word *tenantries,* a term he often used in pointing to the destiny of the believer, which would be akin to what Jesus meant by "In my Father's house are many mansions." When Campbell's bright little son died, he saw him drafted by God to serve in some special way in the vast reaches of the universe, perhaps on some distant planet.

I share with brother Campbell the conviction that we will not only have new bodies, but new employment, new joys, new ecstasies. He liked to say as he anticipated heaven, "No employment, no enjoyment," and I would add "No growth, no life." We continue working, growing, serving, learning. That is why I am convinced that our little ones whose preparatory years are cut short in this world will continue to grow in the next world, and when Ouida asks me if this includes the millions of aborted babies, I have to answer in the affirmative, for God's plan for a single soul cannot fail.

If I believe that there will be a new earth and that one day the knowledge of the Lord will cover the earth as the waters cover the sea and that nations will no longer make war but beat their swords into plowshares, as the prophets assure us, then I believe in a coming millennium, whether a literal thousand years in duration or much longer. And I cannot make sense of Rom. 9-Il except to conclude that the Jews will someday accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah. And yet I am not wise enough to know how it all falls together. As to what kind of a millennialist I am, I find myself sympathetic with the fellow that avowed he was a pan-millennialist, for he was confident that it would all *pan* out all right!

I suppose I do not believe in the imminent coming of Christ, for it seems to me that other things have to happen first, such as the gospel being preached in all the world, but I may be wrong. He will of course come "soon" as the Scriptures say, but since time with God is not the same as time with us, I would not be surprised if the world as we know it is but in the infancy of its history. There could be an 11,988 A.D. Nations not yet born may rise and fall before the curtain finally falls. And the curtain may fall in ways far beyond anything we can imagine. One thing is evident, God's overwhelming longsuffering. He is giving us lots of time to see what we can do with his world (and his universe in outer space?).

I can't see that it matters all that much when the Lord comes, for if he does not come to us, we will soon be going to him - all of us in a matter of a few short years! At this point I can inject the one great truth that continually thrills my soul: "And so we shall always be with the

Lord," as Paul puts it in 1 Thess. 4:17.1 share Paul's conviction that when we are "absent from the body" we are "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. *5:8),* and that when we "depart" from this world we are "with Christ" (Philip. 1:24). I don't believe in any soul-sleeping doctrine.

So what matters about our Lord's coming is that we always be ready. His parables indicate that our service to him is not to be crisis centered or emergency ridden. We don't have to work ourselves into a frenzy or try to stay on "a High" about Jesus coming soon. He him self puts it this way, and rather calmly: "Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes" (Lk. 12:43). Those who ask us to live in immediate expectation, as if Jesus is coming today or this year, are to be advised that Jesus himself made it clear that he will come "at an hour you do not expect" (Lk. 12:40). The point is not to know the time but to *be ready!*

So that is what I believe: stay busy "so doing" until he comes or we go to him. The faithful servant is the one who "stays with it," and it doesn't matter all that much when the Lord comes. I would doubt that the likes of Mother Teresa gives much thought to when Jesus might come, but it is likely that he will find her "so doing" whenever it is.

The teaching of Jesus makes it clear that much of the "so doing" is to be for the dispossessed of the world. If we follow Jesus, we will show compassion for the poor, the maligned, the maltreated, the lonely, the divorced, the diseased, the young, the aged. In deeds more than in creeds!

What future is there for the dispossessed? I believe we can see their future in the ministry of Jesus. Indeed, God's tomorrow is anticipated in the ministry of Jesus. We see Jesus blessing little children, lifting up the fallen, and showing mercy to the rejected and afflicted. That is God's future: no more starving or abused children, no more despair, no more crippling diseases.

What do I see in the future, God's future? No more injustice, no more wars, no more heartache, no more malice, no more hunger. The future is Jesus Christ, who is the same yesterday, today, and forever. This world will one day know the kind of world Jesus was making when he was in this world. We don't know when or even how, except that we are all involved, and things may get much worse before that future comes, but it will come.

Since I agree with brother Campbell that no man, however enlightened or gifted, can form one adequate conception of God's glorious future, I will defer to Him who dwells in unapproachable light and who sits upon the throne and promises that there will be new heavens and a new earth. Thank God, I believe it! — the *Editor*

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# THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Cecil Hook

A lady once quipped to me that she had heard so many sermons about the Ethiopian eunuch that she felt personally acquainted with him. Perhaps, you feel the same way about the Rich Young Ruler. But have you heard my revised version of the account about him? Let me tell you about it.

He was such an admirable person who seemed to have everything going in his favor, for he was young, wealthy, a ruler, upright, sincere, God-fearing, respectful, and eager for self-improvement. He must have been handsome, too! Have you ever known a nicer person? Without regard for the dignity of his position, he ran to Jesus and knelt before him inquiring, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?"

You remember that Jesus was disappointed with the response of this loveable inquirer. At what point in the interview was Jesus disappointed? My revised version may offer you something different to consider.

That sincere young man was not coming to Jesus asking him for eternal life, but he was wanting to know what good deed he could do to gain that life. Jesus recognized in him the heart of the achiever-the do-it-yourself religion of the Pharisee. Jesus' answer should have brought him to a proper sense of perspective:

"If you would enter life, keep the commandments." But, as Jesus began to enumerate the Ten Commandments, the young man interrupted, "Teacher, all these have I observed from my youth; what do I still lack?"

Generally, we have praised the young man for his keeping of all the commandments and his desire to go beyond perfect law-keeping into meritorious philanthropy. Jesus' answer should have broken through the youth's facade of achieved righteousness so that he would have responded despairingly, "But, Teacher, you know that I cannot keep all the commandments perfectly! You know that law cannot give life!" Then Jesus could have reassured him with, "Believe on me and I will give you eternal life!" Or, as he offered to the Samaritan woman, "Ask me for living water; the water that I shall give you will become in you a spring of water welling up to eternal life."

"Now that I am such an exemplary law-keeper," the young man seems to be saying, "what good deed of achievement do I lack?" So, Jesus seems to be answering him, "All right, since you are going the route of achievement, I am challenging you to go all the way: sell all that you have and give it to the poor and follow me as an itinerate preacher!" Instead of the young man recognizing the futility of his effort toward achieved righteousness, he only saw that he

was beaten in his own game. So, he walked away in sadness. He failed his own challenge which Jesus threw back to him. We, like Jesus, love him for his goodness and are saddened to see him leave being so rich, yet so poor.

While our attention is given to Jesus' teaching concerning the peril of riches in this text, it must not be diverted from the real lesson about justification and righteousness which the Rich Young Ruler inquired about.

When the disciples inquired in puzzlement, "Then who can be saved?" Jesus replied, "With men this is impossible." This most nearly perfect of human beings could not save himself through his sincerest effort of good works, and he lost the joy of his religion when he realized that he could not. He walked away with saddened countenance instead of waiting to hear the good news of grace that "with God all things are possible!" God can save the imperfect man, knowing that he will always be imperfect and undeserving.

In our sermonizing on this narrative, we have generally emphasized the disappointment in that this young man was unwilling to give all that he had to the poor: yet, we do not make that a prerequisite of eternal life for the rest of us. Jesus never set the impoverishing of ourselves as a prerequisite of salvation, but he was trying to make this works-oriented man see the folly of depending upon what he could accomplish. With man—even this most nearly perfect man—it is impossible. After receiving the gift of life from Jesus, he would have had his riches to use in expressing his love and gratitude to both God and man.

In our generation, many disciples have turned away with saddened countenance because they have felt that they could never measure up. Many others have continued to hear the burden of a demand religion as they doggedly try to perform all the good works. They, like the young ruler, are never sure that they are doing enough. They lose the joy of their relationship with Christ.

But, praise the Lord, others of us are accepting imputed justification by the grace of God through faith in Christ and are accepting righteousness as a gift. Being free of the oppressive yoke of legal demands, they no longer feel compelled to prove themselves good enough to be saved or to do deeds of philanthropy sufficient to gain his favor. In their sanctified lives, they use his gifts to show their love and gratitude by serving God and their fellow man. It is a life of security, joy, and happiness.

The old version pictures efforts of achieved righteousness; the revised version illustrates the good news of the grace of God. Surely, Jesus must have been disappointed with the very first words of the Rich Young Ruler when he asked, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to inherit eternal life?" — 1350 Huisache, New Braunfels, Texas

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## OUR CHANGING WORLD

While I become more involved in our computer each month, I have my problems. The other day I was composing an article on the word processor when all that I had done suddenly disappeared. I made a wrong move and all my labor escaped into the deep recesses of the computer. I called on Ouida for help and she soon retrieved my literary treasure. I find myself moralizing about the antics of this mysterious device. Once I have composed a few paragraphs and then decide to quit for awhile, I cannot shut off the computer without telling it to "save" what I have done. If I do not save it, it might not be there when I return. If I forget to do this, a message comes on the screen "Do you want to save this?" I have to respond with a "click," yes or no, before the computer will let me go. I sometimes think of our busy, fleeting days when a lot of things are said and done and stored in God's computer. At the end of a day I imagine a voice asking me, "Do you want to save the things said and done today?" It would be nice if at the end of each day we could click out the bad and save the good, but life's computer is not like that. It is not a bad lesson to learn that we are to "walk circumspectly" and thus take heed to what we put into God's computer to start with. And is this not what forgiveness is, when God clicks out the bad, even as we record it' never to be brought up again? Wow!

This should reach you in time to remind you of two significant gatherings. The Bering Drive Church of Christ in Houston is celebrating the bicentennial of Alexander Campbell's birth with a program on "Reflections on the Proclamation of the Gospel in Churches of Christ," May 27-28. Speakers include Rubel Shelley, Carl Ketcherside, and Roy Osborne. You can get a special deal at a nearby Holiday Inn. The church's address is 1910 Bering Dr., Houston 77057. The other important affair is the reunion of the old Hartford Forum that Carl Ketcherside and I began back in 1958. All who ever participated are invited to return May 20-21 to the East Maple Street Chapel in Hartford, Illinois. Carl and I will both be on hand, the Lord willing. Contact B. E. McCann, 127 Donna Dr., Hartford, Il. 62048.

The Calvin Presbyterian Church in Houston recently ran an ad in a Houston paper that included, "Our motto is 'In Essentials, UNITY; In Non-Essentials, LIBERTY; In all things, CHARITY.'" While we count that slogan our own, it does go back to the Protestant Reformation and belongs to the church at large. All factions among us have always approved of the slogan, but we've never been able to agree on what is essential and non-essential, or matters of faith and matters of opinion, as the slogan often goes. Maybe the Presbyterians can do a better job, and they may need it as much as we since they are divided into at least 16 different sects.

Billy Graham recently preached for the first time in China. He was heard by an overflow crowd of 1500 at the Beijing Christian Church. As he always does he preached Christ and him crucified. He also met with the premier of the city who was quoted by the press as saying, "China can never be prosperous and strong with only material development. It also needs spiritual forces."

The man who recently won a million dollars in the Florida lottery is a member of the Church of Christ who never gambles, not even on lotteries. He even voted against the lottery. He found the winning ticket in the parking lot of his business. Always a tither, he gave $100,000 of his winnings to his church.

Then there is the story of the janitor at Bethany College who didn't win a million dollars but made that much in the stock market over a period of 30 years. A bachelor, he left most of it to the college. No one around had any idea he had that kind of money since his life style was one that became a janitor. When this story was published by the Associated Press, Ouida and I were especially interested since I was on the faculty at Bethany when Larry Hummel was a janitor. I often consulted with the professor of economics about investments, but apparently consulted with the wrong man! It shows once more that we cannot judge by appearance. We just might have surprises like that in heaven.

I recently claimed in an article in the Christian Standard that many if not most of the members of the Churches of Christ no longer believe that instrumental music is necessarily a sin and that it should not be made a test of fellowship. This was recently confirmed by a series of articles by Steve Ink in *Image*, edited by Reuel Lemmons, in which some of the old arguments against instrumental music, such as Noah and gopher wood, are questioned. One *Image* article said, "In the case of adding the instrument to the assembly, there is no violation of any command. Adding the instrument does not prohibit singing, etc." Coming from a non-instrument Church of Christ journal, this hermeneutical honesty is very encouraging.

The Central Church of Christ, 1710 W. Airport Freeway, Irving, Tx. 75062, announces its Second Annual Choral Festival, June 4. Ten Church of Christ choruses will spend the day rehearsing and being critiqued by Dr. Charles Nelson, Artist-in-Residence at ACU. The public is invited to the Finale in the evening at 7:30 p.m. where each chorus will perform separately and then join together to form a mass acappella choir. This should be acappella music at its best.

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## READER'S EXCHANGE

## Arkansas Correspondence

We pastor the Assembly of God Church here. By mistake we received your magazine instead of the Church of Christ. We liked it. We have never met Church of Christ people who think like you. I must admit that most have been a real thorn in the flesh for us. I am enclosing $3.00 for a bundle of back issues of *Restoration Re*view. Your servant in Christ. —*Hal Corbett, Bradley, Arkansas.*

My dear Sir, brother in the Lord:

I was pleased to learn that a copy of *Restoration Review* addressed to the Church of Christ was delivered to you at the Assembly of God. Perhaps that shows that the postman has a better understanding of the nature of Christ's community upon earth than we have in that he saw no distinction between the Church of Christ and the Assembly of God. Who knows but what he has left some of your mail at the Church of Christ! Someone may have to apprise him of a fact that is not evident in Scripture: that the Church of Christ and the Assembly of God are distinct and separate bodies - not in heaven but in Bradley, Arkansas!

But in correcting the postman we are admitting our heresy. We are heretics as long as we tolerate divisions among Christians and claim that the Assembly of God, Church of God, Christian Church, and Church of Christ are separate bodies. The Scriptures know of only one church, the Body of Christ, and it is variously described as Assembly of God, Church of God, etc., and when we divide that one church into so many sects that not only remain separate from each other but often treat each other as enemies we are heretics and factionists. May God have mercy onus in our sin of perpetuating these ugly divisions and doing little or nothing to fulfill the prayer of our Lord for the unity of his people!

I am sorry that you have not always had pleasant experiences with members of the Church of Christ. But I am pleased to inform you that there are many in the Church of Christ who would treat you in a kind and brotherly manner. In our zeal for what we believe to be true we sometimes behave in a sectarian way, but more and more of our people are coming to realize that we can believe we are right without having to believe that everyone else is wrong. We are realizing more than ever before that a Christlike spirit is more important than being right about every point of doctrine.

But we in Churches of Christ are not the only ones who have had a problem with a sectarian and exclusivistic attitude. Pharisaism has plagued the church at large all these centuries. No denomination is completely free of it. We must all help each other to "Receive one another even as Christ has received you" (Rom. 15:7).

And that is the way I love and receive you, dear brother, sight unseen, the way Christ loves and receives me, warts and all! I hope our new friendship will cause you to reach out to more Church of Christ people in a humble and forgiving way. There will be those that will love and receive you in return. My prayer is that God will use a stray copy of *Restoration Review* to make peace in Bradley, Arkansas. We know that He does things like that, don't we?

We have put a bundle of back issues m the mail to you, and as a token of appreciation for the neat thing that has happened between us we are sending the paper to you gratis for the next year. Who knows but what you will soon be sharing these with members of the Church of Christ! --*Leroy Garrett, Editor.*

I enjoy your articles on the different denominations. I have so much more to learn. I have a dream that one day our sectarian signs can be removed, and even though there may be differences in the way we worship we can still praise God in the way He intended. -*Pat Carter, LaPlace, LA.*

I've enjoyed your series on your visits to the various denominations. I especially appreciated your open-minded treatment of the Unitarian-Universalists. I'm hoping for an article on the United Church of Christ since that denomination had part of its origin with the Congregational Christian Church which did not merge with the Stone-Campbell movement in the early 1800's.-- *Richard Clark, Salem, IN.*

(We do not have the United Church of Christ in Denton, but we do have the Disunited Church of Christ, which I may eventually write about since I know more about it than any other church and probably love it the most. --*Ed.*

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## BOOK NOTES

College Press is planning to publish *The Works of W. Carl Ketcherside in* eleven volumes. These will include all of *Mission Messenger* from *1957-1975,* along with 16 other books by Carl that have long been out of print. We can offer you a pre-publication price of $139.00 plus postage. If you are interested you should place your order with us, but you need not send any money yet.

Leon Morris' *The Cross of Christ* is a study of the Cross as its message relates to the problems of futility, loneliness, sickness and death, and selfishness. The author has given his life to a study of the meaning of the Cross. This book will bless you. $7.95 postpaid.

*Call Me Blessed* by Faith Martin is about the emerging Christian woman. It contends that women have been denied their proper place in the church as much as they have in society and that the Bible has been misused to justify this. It maintains that passages about women have been translated and interpreted to satisfy a male- dominated society. She shows that women too are "sons of God" with all the rights of sonship. $8.95 postpaid.

Because of a special purchase we can offer R.V.G. Tasker's commentary on Matthew for only $5.95 postpaid. If you do not have a commentary on this book, I recommend it as one that helps the reader to understand what the text actually says and means.

It is apparent that many are interested in answers to the problems related to divorce and remarriage, for we have to keep ordering copies of Olan Hicks' *What the Bible Says about Marriage, Divorce and Remarriage.* You will find this book both convincing and liberating. $13.50 postpaid.

*The Stone-Campbell Movement* by Leroy Garrett now has thousands of appreciative readers, and we are convinced that you too will profit by it. It informs you in an interesting way what your heritage is all about. You may purchase it outright at $21.95 or you may receive a free copy when you send us a club of eight subs to this journal, new or renewal, including your own, a total of $24.00, but you must request the book.

We also have a special deal on our five available bound volumes of this journal, which cover eight years of publication, 1977-84, only $40.00.

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